

# MAGSUSU REVIEW

*Masthead's reporters share the wisdom from top experts at June's conference. More than 150 tips!*

## BE A STELLAR SELLER

- Voicemail is your foe...Use it sparingly.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Own the conversation – You do 10% of the talking while your prospect talks for 90% of the time.
- Sell multiple online ads. A series of banner ads featuring a single product or service can be sprinkled throughout an article. Connect these ads to tell a story. Marketers love that.



FACT

- Be patient. Currently 12% of the media advertising dollars are spent on online space.
- Meet the REAL decision-makers.
- Concentrate on building rapport, not making a quick sale.
- Find out your prospect's hot buttons (Editorial, positioning, etc.)
- Understand your prospect's personality and sell accordingly.
- Start by making calls, then follow-up with emails later in the day, during non-peak selling hours.
- Understand that you are your magazine's brand, or at least that is what clients expect to some extent.
- Read your magazine from cover to cover—many reps actually don't!

- Make sure there's a solid market fit that makes sense to YOU, because you have to sell it.
- Brainstorm with your sales team. Select categories you want to break into. Identify the top three, five or 10 prospects.
- Create visually strong media kits.
- Always retain the willingness to pursue direct-to-client opportunities.
- Meet the "your circ is too small" objection by pointing to your magazine's readership, its solid editorial and its position as an industry leader.
- Use non-traditional advertisers that you've already landed to lure others.



TIP

- Meet the "our budget is spent" objection by suggesting that insertions be moved to your magazine, or offer delayed billing for the next fiscal. If the client is price sensitive, suggest a smaller ad with greater frequency.
- Be willing to go off ratecard but only to break into a new category.
- Offer solutions, don't be a problem.
- Persistence is key—clients don't always see the fit.

## MARKET AND PROMOTE

- Sales promotions don't need to break the bank. Just be creative.



DONT

- Don't send e-mails to be opened on Monday mornings.
- Plan your Direct Mail delivery – Mail drops on Mondays for receipt Tuesdays or Wednesdays.
- Make the shift away from "the more campaigns, the better." Since you're now working to cross-sell and up-sell, focus on quality and engagement with your marketing campaigns.
- For e-bills and e-renewals, push security and convenience rather than your brand. Your e-bills and e-renewals may look bland, but online security is still an important issue in many readers' minds.
- Have a PS in letters or e-mail. It is the most read part of a letter.
- Focus on niches. Today's trend is on niche markets and interests, not psychographics or demographics.
- Throughout your campaign, use the appropriate design that matches your

offer and copy. Start your efforts with a calm, welcoming design and end with a bold and urgent feel. Continue to keep your design clean and make it easy for readers to respond.

- Use tactics to personalize your material, such as fonts and signatures that appear handwritten, postage indicia that appears hand applied and stock that looks and feels like a personal letter.
- Don't be afraid to use personality in your copy and design. Your magazine's character and style should come out in your marketing material.
- Use variety in your design—especially in your outer envelopes—so people won't think they've seen the piece before and toss it in the recycle bin.



IDEA

- Announce awards you've won. Use endorsements and name-dropping in your copy. Show readers that they are smart to associate themselves with your magazine.

**“Maxim is the most brilliant magazine in the world. If you don’t read it, you should.”**  
**—Derek Finkle, former editor of men’s magazine *Toro*.**



## GO DIGITAL OR ENHANCE YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE

- Use the technology. Get on Facebook, MySpace, Friendster. Start a blog. To know what is going to work for your brand, your readers and your advertisers, you need to be net savvy.
- Collaborate. The real opportunity to make money on your website is through collaboration projects. For example, [www.flavorpill.net](http://www.flavorpill.net) worked with Verizon to sell ringtones that were available exclusively through Flavorpill’s website.
- Use eye-catching images to draw in the reader and don’t get too cute with your copy. If you can afford it, hire a professional designer and copywriter before launching your site.



SAVE

- Web ads are cheap. Customized videos and web pages can be done online for a fraction of the cost of TV ads.
- Encourage online self-service. Having subscribers make changes to their profile over the web is the best way to gather clean data and familiarize subscribers with online fulfillment.
- Don’t make readers work to access

your product and services. Pre-populate your online forms and give subscribers one password to manage every service.

- Treat your print and online channels as different entities and offer different customer-care services for each.
- Think of your website as a brand extension.



TIP

- Model your digital edition like a separate publication with specific measurable goals and a realistic budget.
- Don’t waste time on podcasting. Podcasts have not taken off the way that web publishers intended (mostly because the cell phone technology is still lacking and cell phone companies are not cooperating).
- Incorporate open source concepts, which promote user-generated content and interaction into your online publishing model.
- Participation creates loyalty, which creates traffic, which creates stickiness, which creates participation.
- Help users take over your site by allowing them to personalize it. Let them access and organize your content in ways



HOW-TO

- Take content from your magazine and “slice and dice” it into different channels online. Carve up your content in a way that is different from how it is presented in the magazine but makes sense online. For example, *Acoustic Guitar* magazine puts podcasts of music discussed in the magazine on its site for readers to hear. ([www.acousticguitar.com](http://www.acousticguitar.com))
- Inform readers when your site is updated with new content using an RSS feed.
- Encourage readers to use social bookmarking tools like [del.icio.us](http://del.icio.us) (<http://del.icio.us>) or Digg ([www.digg.com](http://www.digg.com)) by putting a button to one of these networks on your site. Users can save links to your web pages and tag them with their own labels. These collected links and tags are live on

the web for all to see and use. On Digg, people vote on their favourites. This helps create buzz and introduces your site to new users.

- Allow users to comment on, post and share content on your site. For example, Jackson Free Press.com allows readers to comment on everything from articles to event listings.



HOW-TO

- Another great way to encourage users to interact with your site is by allowing them to post pictures, events and content. Feed the frenzy by promoting the best recent pictures or comments posted.
- Make your website relevant to readers and search engines. Research keywords your readers will likely use to find your subject matter, and develop a linking strategy that will connect your site with other suitable sites. Use relevant language and images so that search engines can easily find you.

## NURTURE YOUR WRITERS

- When appropriate, jump into stories and help your writers write or interview. Writers want to hear their editors ask, “How can I help?”



FACT

- Good editors ask good questions, are curious, empathetic and listen.
- Talk to your writers about writing. When you give an assignment, make sure your writer understands it. Provide guidance and be specific.
- Don’t micromanage and completely rewrite someone’s work. Be sensitive when spotting flaws and make positive suggestions.
- Plant ideas to improve a story by asking the writer questions, i.e. “What does this mean?”
- Put writers’ guidelines on your website; it saves you time and informs prospective freelancers what’s desired and expected.

- Convey an interest in learning what your writers are discovering—it will encourage them to learn even more.
- Meet with your freelancers as a group, where practicable, and ask them what they’re struggling with, what they love, and share with them examples of great work.



HOW-TO

- Stress the importance of “pre-drafts.” Ask writers to draw up a pre-draft list of topics to be discussed. Time is often wasted in the draft phase because no pre-writing has been done. The first draft will be easier to get through because the writer can easily refer to the pre-draft, using it as a blueprint for the first draft.
- Urge writers to have an ear and eye for dramatic tension, to sift through their notes and interviews for conflicts, contrasts, contradictions, paradoxes, two things that don’t normally go together.

## PRODUCE A REAL PAGE-TURNER

- Put a caption on everything. It should explain what you are looking at and why readers should care.
- Create multiple entry points in your service pieces by using images, captions, heds, deks, section markers, pull quotes, labels, headers or tabs.



IDEA

- Add interesting elements to your service pieces such as polls, questions, large quotes, trivia bubbles, quizzes, flow charts, diagrams, maps, photos with annotations and so on.
- Photograph the ordinary in an extraordinary way. See *O, The Oprah Magazine* and *Martha Stewart Living* for examples of great photography.
- Pack your service articles full of interesting items but create a clear hierarchy to differentiate between them.
- Pull quotes needn’t appear in order or near the actual text. Their purpose is to hook prospective readers who are flipping

through the book. Look for the juiciest bits.

- Create the back-of-book with the awareness that 50% of readers begin flipping through the magazine from back to front. Have a signature backpage item that is compelling.



DON'T

- Thou shalt not: use clip art, use too many typefaces, sell editorial coverage for advertising support.
- Make sure your art director understands what it is you’re trying to accomplish.
- Use themed sections, which can be extremely popular with readers and therefore advertisers, who have been known to clamour to be in them.
- Design can convey attitude and sense of humour. Don’t overlook opportunities in this regard.
- Choose words that have imagery and your writing will be memorable.

## PACK A PUNCH WITH PACKAGING



QUOTE

“Packaging is like getting dressed in the morning. You pick pieces that are tailored to your readership and put it all together.” —Sara Angel, former editor of Chatelaine.

• To create successful packaging, art and editorial have to work hand in hand.

• For good examples of great packaging techniques, read *Details*, the U.K. and U.S. versions of *Esquire* and *GQ* and, of course, *Maxim*.

• “New York magazine’s triumph over *The New Yorker* at this year’s American National Magazine Awards is indicative of the changing tide where packaging is now considered a legitimate pursuit for editors.” —Derek Finkle

## TEST YOUR MARKET

• Test your different insert cards in three or four consecutive issues and compare the results.

• Test your creative and subscription offer to measure what works best online.

• Test price, premiums, creative, term, hard versus soft offers and tactics such as contests and auto-renewal programs.



FACT

• Testing is the best way to find what works for your magazine and what will grab the attention of your specific demographic.

• Make sure you have the infrastructure already in place to measure the results of your tests.

## TREAT RENEWALS LIKE GOLD

• Drive the two-year subscription offer on your insert cards to maximize efficiency. Insert cards are cheap and generate a high renewal rate, making them a prime channel to up-sell.

• Know your rate base and renewal rate and you’ll have a clear idea of how much new business you’ll need. If your renewal rate is high, your rate base can stay the same and you’ll need less new business.



FACT

• Always spend more money and time on renewals than your new-business campaigns. Chasing new business is more expensive than keeping business.

• Continue to add new renewal sources to your marketing mix as long as the cost to do so remains less than the cost to generate your most expensive new-business campaign. Exhaust all your renewal sources before you go after new business.



TIP

• Convince subscribers to save money, time and trees by renewing their subscription on time. Lock subscribers into a lower rate early in your renewal series to avoid future price increases. Train them to respond quickly.

• Strategize your renewal series. Start your efforts with a “VIP” price or a premium and end with urgency and guilt!

Lots more tips, list of experts and slideshow at [www.MagsU.com](http://www.MagsU.com)

## SELL ONLINE ADS

• Generate content by giving your readers/ users the opportunity to make their voices heard online. Create a poll, a diary, a place where readers can upload information like recipes, solutions, or ideas. This lets advertisers know that you have a committed online audience.

• Move fast for your client. If an ad works, keep it. If it doesn’t work, don’t be afraid to change it. Don’t be held back by the constraints of traditional magazine advertising. You have the power to immediately fix what doesn’t work.

• Leverage your brand. It’s important to advertisers.

• Figure out your site’s busiest time. You can sell this to advertisers. This has value! Sell “above the fold” (i.e. home page, most popular pages, section pages). This, too, has value. Price accordingly.

• Tell people what’s going to be different online. Archived articles? A readers’ blog? Podcasts? White papers? More photos? What makes your online presence so valuable? You need the print to drive the web.



FACT

• Set expectations. A good click-through rate for a standard online ad is 0.2 - 0.8%. Ninety-eight percent of the time readers will NOT click-through. Educate your clients; they need to look at how the business is doing as a whole rather than simply looking at click-through rates. Clicks don’t measure branding or post-click activity.

• Report online statistics right away. The click-through rate is high in the first few days. After that report, weekly.

• Propose larger ad sizes to your clients. The bigger the better. Half-page ads are

the best. Also, ads that are integrated into the content (i.e. where the reader doesn’t have to leave the page) are ideal. Offer your creative services to your advertisers. They may not know how to create web appropriate ads. Don’t allow them to repurpose print ads. Go for a media-rich, web-suitable approach.

• Advise advertisers to have at least two creatives for every week they will be online. This is useful for testing what works and what’s a flop.



DON'T

• Don’t be a one-person focus group. Just because you never click through ads, look at pop-ups or touch roll-overs doesn’t mean they don’t work.

• Understand your data. You should know your online data the same way you know your circulation numbers. Track unique visitors, page views, length of sessions, entry and exit points, up times and down times. You will have a stronger selling proposition if you know what’s happening on your site.

• Consider offering sponsored content to your advertisers. This can be a section of the website where they will always have high visibility, which means higher reach. This is also an opportunity for your client to always be associated with your brand. Stop talking about the value-add. Online advertising is a powerful way for advertisers to reach their customers, your readers. They are getting in contact with a more dedicated, informed and engaged community.



FACT

• If a reader is online, it is because they want to be there, not because they happen to be flipping through a magazine.

## GET FUNDING



HOW-TO

• Aim for 50% request circulation so that your magazine will qualify for the Publication Assistance Program (PAP) offered through the Department of Canadian Heritage and Canada Post.

• Be sure your publication meets the PAP eligibility requirements, such as the publishing cycle, advertising content, Canadian content and frequency of pub-

lication. These eligibility requirements are listed in detail on the Department of Canadian Heritage Website at [http://www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/progs/ac-ca/progs/pap/index\\_e.cfm](http://www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/progs/ac-ca/progs/pap/index_e.cfm).

• Once you’ve established publication assistance, focus your attention on increasing your advertising dollars and competitive advantage. Aggressively promote your magazine and leave your competitor scrambling to catch up!

## AVOID THESE WEBSITE MISTAKES



DON'T

• **Perpetuating advertising/editorial confusion.** What’s an ad? What’s an article? Be clear!

• **Squandered vertical space.** Stretch out those logos (nameplates) and deliver content “above the fold” (i.e., don’t make users scroll down for their first hit of content.)

• **Too much information.** Be selective. Simplify. Organize.

• **Un-Webified text.** Don’t simply dump vast blocks of text onto the site. It’s no fun to read. Pare long pieces into sections with additional subheads, eye-catching bold-faced words, bullets, links.

• **Shirking the “search” imperative.** A search box should be conspicuous on every page. Some sites even fail to offer a search box at all. Render results in a user-friendly format.

• **Unconventional navigation.** When users don’t know what’s a link and what isn’t they have to go exploring with their mouses. Why are you making them work? Avoid “fly-out” menus that obstruct other parts of the page. Change the colour of links once

they’ve been clicked. Users like to know where they’ve been.

• **Failing to educate the user.** Don’t assume that users are familiar with the print publication and all its regular departments and sections, however well-known these are to traditional readers.

• **Burying your treasure.** Akin to burying the lede in the news writing business. What are the top three reasons people would come to your site? Satisfy that demand by making that content conspicuous.

• **The dump.** Some publishers insist on merely repeating online what they have done in print. Instead, try to carve up all your content into categories that are likely to interest your various kinds of users. If you do nothing else, provide searchability of the magazine’s archive.

• **Stuck in magazine mode.** Remember, the Web is always on—it’s a real-time data hub. Offer “test drives” on new features, or “first looks” at new content, lots of how-to’s and a very hands-on approach to encourage interactivity. Video is a no-brainer and is one of the emerging strengths of the Web.

## “I’m a big fan of finding the gratuitous, the obscene, the offbeat.” – Lynn Cunningham, Associate Professor and Director of Ryerson University’s magazine program



### BOOST CIRCULATION



IDEA

Offer premiums with a high-perceived value but low production cost on your end. Premiums and gifts generate high renewal rates, and gift-getters often become gift-givers.

- Use a simple tracking-code system, such as source/year/month/side A or B of the subscription card.
- Develop your request readership by collecting signed or written requests or verified telephone requests indicating readers’ interest in receiving your publication. With an email campaign, the answer to a personalized question (“what is your mother’s maiden name?”) is used in place of a signature and meets CCAB and ABC audit requirements.
- Remember to only send your email campaigns to recipients who have provided clear consent to receive such information.

- Avoid having your email sent directly to junk boxes. Be sure the name of your magazine is listed in the “from” line of your email campaign and use mail filters like SpamAssassin ([www.spamassassin.apache.org](http://www.spamassassin.apache.org)) to test if your email will be tagged as spam.
- Make it easy for readers to subscribe online. Clearly place links to your sign-up page above the page fold so readers don’t even need to scroll down to subscribe.
- Take advantage of list purchases, internal and contact databases, websites, trade shows and partnerships with organizations and associations to help build your request circulation.
- Be marketing savvy with your request campaigns so that you can effectively reach the most suitable readers and encourage them to respond quickly.

- Have a plan before launching your request campaign and forecast estimated responses and promotional costs. On average, email is the most efficient channel to launch your campaign due to the high response rates and low costs. Direct mail and inserts generate low response rates and can be costly.



TIP

- Think of your subscription cards as mini billboards for your magazine. Keep your cards simple and clean with sharp and welcoming images.
- Circulation drives marketing. Because you are the data keeper, it’s up to you to recognize what’s working for the magazine and what’s not.
- Include multiple response channels on your cards, such as 1-800 numbers, return mailing address, website address and email address.

- Always include a privacy opt-out option on your material. Think of yourself as an Audience Development Manager rather than a Circulation Manager. Publishers’ revenue mixes and business plans are changing with growing brand extensions, such as websites, newsletters and trade shows.
- Make the shift away from “the more campaigns, the better.” Since you’re now working to cross- and up-sell, you must focus on quality and engagement with your marketing campaigns.
- Use design tactics such as price slashes, savings percentages in bold colours and flashy images of bonus gifts to emphasize the savings and value.
- Always offer an up-sell on your subscription form or, if you’re a multi-magazine publisher, push your other publications on the subscription confirmation page.

### BE AUDIT-SAVVY



FACT

- Audit reports do not go unnoticed, especially in the eyes of media planners.
- Understand your audit reports so you’ll be armed with the answers before the client asks.
- A subscription to ABC allows you to access the online section – where you will find approximately 10 years of information and a variety of reporting options.
- ABC also reports and offers spill analysis reports for U.S. magazines in Canada – very useful when battling over a North American client who believes their U.S. magazine campaign is just as strong in Canada.

### PREPARE TO BE JUDGED BY YOUR COVER



TIP

- Illustrate a major article on the cover, don’t highlight a minor one as your main cover image.
- Understand that most small magazines will not receive full cover display at the newsstands, so use marginal space wisely for maximum impact.
- Covers must be visually striking.
- Have a consistent visual identity so your magazine doesn’t look different every issue (think of *Time’s* red border, for example).

### GET AUDIT-READY

- Be prepared for database-centric auditing. Stay on top of legitimate data sources, aging data and create regular reports that provide a snapshot of your current data. These steps will help you keep a healthy database.
- Be prepared for audits of different channels, including print, digital and even event-generated data. Pay close attention to proper subscription-request criteria.
- Adhere to all audit-bureau rules and privacy regulations. Ensure the audit forms are submitted to your audit bureau for validation prior to launching your campaign. Always provide readers with opt-out options.



TIP

- Understand the audit rules regarding transfers of service from print to digital. Consult the audit board early so that you can work and plan your site within their guidelines.
- Avoid delays in your audit process and submit your material on time.
- Be sure to report premiums and gifts on your audit statement. You do not need to report discounted access to a paid website or access to your magazine’s events that are exclusive to subscribers.
- For digital editions, always include the recipient’s mailing address as well as email address in your reporting.

- Take advantage of the free online toolkit Rapid Report launched in 2006. The toolkit allows you to report your top-line circulation data on an issue-by-issue basis within weeks of the on-sale or distribution date. Advertisers can now see your most current figures. Go to [www.accessabc.com/consumer/c\\_rapidreport.htm](http://www.accessabc.com/consumer/c_rapidreport.htm) for more information on the Rapid Report.
- For sponsored-sales programs launched after January 2007, clearly inform subscribers (typically on the front cover) who sponsored the issue by including the sponsor’s logo or phrases such as “provided by...” or “compliments of...”

Programs in place prior to January can run their course without adhering to the modified rule.

- Familiarize yourself with verified-circulation audit rules. Verified circulation includes copies designated by publishers for readers in public places, such as hotel rooms and waiting rooms, and to individual users who have an affinity for the publication. Copies classified as ‘verified’ are not subjected to paid circulation qualification standards.
- Provide sources to validate your verified circulation, such as the hotel’s request for the magazine, the list source of individuals’ names, proof of delivery and printing.

### SAVE ON PRINTING



SAVE

- Start with high-end stock and design for your insert cards then work down if you need to save on costs.
- Plan your insert-card schedule ahead of time to save money. Gang print your insert cards for the whole year to help cut costs.

As you move through your renewal series, use smaller forms and less copy and colour.



FACT

- Remember the five-second rule—people will spend about five seconds looking at your cover from five feet away.
- Be provocative with your cover lines and apply a clear hierarchy. There’s a reason we often call cover lines ‘sell lines.’ This is where we’re at our most commercial. Don’t bore people to death.